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Citation style: Muś Anna. (2017). „Zjednoczeni dla Śląska” - Support of Upper Silesians for Regional Initiative. "Political Preferences" (2017, nr 14, s. 157-174), doi 10.6084/m9.figshare.5216209



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**„Zjednoczeni dla Śląska” - Support of Upper
Silesians for Regional Initiative**

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Political Preferences
2017, vol. 14: 157-174.
DOI: 10.6084/m9.figshare.5216209
journals.us.edu.pl/index.php/PP
Submitted: 24/11/2016
Accepted: 14/03/2017



Abstract:

The region of Upper Silesia is recognised as a particular due to the forms of social and political behaviour of a part of its population. Upper Silesians, as ethnic group, are convinced about their separateness. Due to that fact, they are, at least to some extent, an example of a group in which voters' alignments are based on the opposition centre-periphery. This is certainly true for the protagonists of Silesian regional movement, however, this article deals with the problem whether average voter acts similarly. Moreover, the article is a study of a possibility to create an ethnoregionalist party in the future and of consequences that it may have on the politics in the region.

Key words:

regionalist party, ethnoregionalist party, proto-party, Upper Silesians, Upper Silesia

Introduction

“Zjednoczeni dla Śląska” [ZdŚ] (United for Silesia) was an initiative of two minorities living in the region of Upper Silesia. The idea came from German minority associations: Towarzystwo Społeczno-Kulturalne Niemców Województwa Śląskiego (Social and Cultural Society of Germans in Silesian Voivodship) and Niemiecka Wspólnota „Pojednanie i Przyszłość” (German Community “Reconciliation and Future”). Upper Silesians from these associations backed by the Upper Silesian Council became the main force in the project. Zjednoczeni dla Śląska was registered on 13 August 2015 as an Electoral Committee of Voters for Parliamentary Elections, which were to take place the same year.

Germans are recognised as a national minority by Polish law under Art. 2 Para. 2 of Ustawa o mniejszościach narodowych i etnicznych oraz języku regionalnym (National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Language Act). Silesians are not recognised as minority by Polish law, though some scholars argue that they shall be. One of the examples is E.U. Network of Independent Experts on Fundamental Rights which stated that: “(...) the other Member States, some of which, while accepting that minorities exist on their territory, restrict the notion only to certain groups (...) while other groups are being excluded from that notion which, arguably, should be recognized as applicable to them (for instance (...) the Silesian minority in Poland)” (*The Protection of Minorities in European Union...*:10-11). Silesians are recognised as an ethnic group by many Polish scholars (Nijakowski 2004: 155; Szczepański 2004: 114; Wanatowicz 2004: 212; Kijonka 2016: 8). The names Silesians and Upper Silesians will be used alternatively as names of the people declaring themselves as belonging to ethnic group (subjective identification).

Despite efforts and positive reactions to ZdŚ initiative it failed to gain any mandate in the Parliamentary Elections in 2015, and in the matter of fact, was not even close to that. The aim of this article is to study determinants of ZdŚ initiative electoral results and to present a possible future for a Silesian ethnoregionalist party, if it was to arise. To achieve that the issue will be examined whether specific ethnic identity determines voters behaviour. It will be assumed, that for some voters, who identify themselves as Silesians, this auto-identification determines to some extent their voting behaviours. In order to examine the hypothesis, quantitative research – the questionnaire – was conducted from July till October 2016 in district bieruńsko-lędzki, district mikołowski, the city of Piekary Śląskie, district rybnicki and the city of Rybnik. It was conducted mostly among population with high rate of Silesian auto-identifications, due to the fact, that this group was in the centre of the interest of the study. The questionnaire was created having in mind two general questions: what it means to identify oneself as Silesian and whether this identification influences voting behaviour (it was examined *post factum* – a year after relevant elections took place).

Zjednoczeni dla Śląska – an ethnoregionalist proto-party?

The idea of creating “regionalist party”, which will be able to compete in the state-wide elections was not a new one, the leader of Ruch Autonomii Śląska [RAŚ] (Silesian Autonomy

Movement) – Jerzy Gorzelik, had announced the will to create a Silesian Regional Party already in March 2015 (Domagała-Szymonek 2015), but it was to take place rather closer to year 2020. Probably due to that fact, the best-known politicians from RAS were not candidates for 2015 election. Instead, on electoral lists were placed mostly well-known Silesian activists and members of German associations.

Regionalist and ethnoregionalist parties are today recognised as a family since they have been distinguished by Lieven de Winter. He defined them as stating the claim for political reorganisation of the existing Nation–State power structures (1998: 204). The ethnoregionalist parties may be also defined as “referring to the efforts of geographically concentrated peripheral minorities which challenge the working order and sometimes even the democratic order of a nation-state by demanding recognition of their cultural identity” (Müller-Rommel 1998: 19). Some scholars make a distinction between regionalist and ethnoregionalist parties, defining the former as „formations with region–based electorate and mobilisation resources, or as formations representing sub–national (regional) interest communities exercising party functions to the full extent in a regionally defined operating space (...)” (Strmiska 2002). Definitions of a regionalist and an ethnoregionalist party may be found also in Polish literature, for example in the works of Sobolewska-Myślik (2012: 22-23). As far as ZdŚ is concerned, the initiative was not registered as a party pursuant to the Polish law¹ and it was registered for the elections as a committee of voters. On the other hand, it took part in the elections, which usually is an activity of political parties, due to that fact, the author of this article believes, that some analogies to the ethnoregionalist parties can be made at this point. Also, the name “regional party” can be found in literature, but for the purposes of this article no distinction between regional and regionalist party is made.

The political program of ZdŚ was presented in two documents: “Mission” and “12 points”. The former starts with enumerating problems of the Upper Silesia region: crisis of coal mines, social protest, strikes and degeneration of the region. Then it states that there is no will in the central Polish administration to solve problems of Upper Silesia and the lack of commitment to the region among Silesians elected to Parliament from the state-wide parties can be observed. Because of that, it announces the will to take responsibility for the region by all Silesians (also with German or Polish national identities). The way of achieving this is providing Silesian representation composed of different Silesian societies, because the change may only be made by

¹ Dz.U. 1997, nr 98, poz 604, Act of 27 June 1997 on Political Parties.

the people with strong connections to the region (*Zjednoczeni dla Śląska – Misja*). The latter document states that the people are the greatest asset of Upper Silesia. Its culture and tradition are still undervalued which could only be changed by regional education, right to use minority language and the right to cultivate its own collective memory. Silesians shall have real possibilities in education and career. Silesia needs the long-term strategy of development. Post-industrial heritage shall be considered as an asset and shall be used for diminishing unemployment and deepening social integration. The existing industry shall thrive and it shall be based on new technologies and knowledge-based economy. The degradation of natural and social environment shall be stopped. The way of achieving these goals is by developing a policy made for the region in order to promote its economic and social growth. Upper Silesia needs broad political consensus in order to implement long-term development policies (Jodliński 2015). From these documents stems the conclusion that ZdŚ was invented to be a regional and ethnic representation, based in Upper Silesia and if it was a political party it could be categorised as ethno-regionalist.

The political program of ZdŚ is far from being radical. In de Winter's classification it would be categorised as protectionist (Winter 1998: 204). This category was divided by Régis Dandoy into two: protectionist conservative and participationist (2010: 207). In this case ZdŚ is a participationist one, with its goal to establish Silesian representation in the Polish Parliament and present some ideas for the development of the region. Two groups of demands in ZdŚ program can be clearly pointed out: most of them are connected to the development of the single region – Upper Silesia – and a few are based on promotion of ethnic identity of the population of the region – Silesians. The specific feature of the initiative is the cooperation between Silesians having Polish, German and Silesian national identities, which is the heritage of a complicated history and location of the Upper Silesia as a historical borderland. Studies show that this kind of region is often a location, where conflicts between periphery and centre occur, becoming a ground for ethnoregionalist movements and establishing ethnoregionalist parties (Seiler 2005: 46).

Parliamentary elections 2015 – estimations and results

Historically, only once regional organisation was able to get seats in Sejm – the Lower Chamber of Polish Parliament. It happened in 1991, when Ruch Autonomii Śląska gained 2 mandates with 40,061 votes. Moreover, Niemiecki Komitet Wyborczy Regionu Katowickiego

przy Niemieckiej Wspólnocie Roboczej „Pojednanie i Przyszłość” (German Electoral Committee of Katowice Region by German Community “Reconciliation and Future”) got in the same elections 6,108 votes. To sum up, in 1991 both organisations gained more than 46,000 of votes. In the following elections the support for regional and minority organisations was decreasing gradually in the state-wide elections. Still, RAŚ become the regional phenomenon during the elections to the regional council and local authorities in 2010 and 2014. During the elections to decentralised bodies, particularly to Sejmik Województwa Śląskiego (Silesia Voivodship Council), in districts creating the constituency of Katowice for the purposes of Parliamentary Election (bieruńsko-lędziński, Chorzów, Katowice, Mysłowice, Piekary Śląskie, Ruda Śląska, Siemianowice, Świętochłowice, Tychy) RAŚ received 49,183 votes and in districts creating the constituency of Rybnik for the purposes of Parliamentary Election (Jastrzębie-Zdrój, mikołowski, raciborski, Rybnik, rybnicki, wodzisławski, Żory) RAŚ gained 24,886 votes. Summarising, Ruch Autonomii Śląska got its support from 74,069 voters from these two constituencies and farther 23,062 from other areas, mostly in the communities creating the constituency of Gliwice – created for the purposes of Parliamentary Election – (Bytom, Gliwice, gliwicki, tarnogórski, Zabrze) – 17,699 votes ([Results 2014...](#)). Moreover, another Committee – Mniejszości na Śląsku (Minorities in Silesia) received in two constituencies mentioned above – 5,796 votes. This Committee was also founded by regional association – Stowarzyszenie Osób Narodowości Śląskiej (Association of People of Silesian Nationality).

Pursuant to Art. 196 §1 of Kodeks wyborczy (Electoral Code) every committee needs to achieve 5% electoral threshold in the state-wide scale in order to have a chance to gain a mandate. The exception is a committee of a national minority which does not have to achieve that score (Art. 197 §2). These rules are obviously not in favour of regional committees ([Myśliwiec 2015](#)), but ZdŚ as a committee of national minority was not bound by the limitation of the electoral threshold. Due to that fact, pre-electoral estimations predicted that to gain 1 mandate circa 25 thousand of votes would be enough. It seemed likely that at least 3 mandates may be achievable for the ZdŚ Committee, estimations were based on the support for RAŚ and other associations presented above.

Furthermore, the situation in Polish politics in 2015 on the state-level seemed to be in favour. Two main parties did not have a stable support and party governing in the time of elections – Platforma Obywatelska (Civic Platform) – was clearly at the crossroads, losing support and without a clear vision as to its future. The initiative referred to Silesian identity

which has become popular in last few years. One of the latest examples of that fact was the success in 2014 of the civil initiative which collected the support for the changes of the Ustawa o mniejszościach narodowych i etnicznych oraz o języku regionalnym (Act on Ethnic and National Minorities and Regional Language) and introducing Silesians as an ethnic minority in the Polish law. ZdŚ was as well a manifestation that people can unite for the common good, in this case – Upper Silesia Region, regardless of their differences. Moreover, it reminded people that no one will care for their needs, if they cannot do it themselves and that no one understands their needs better than they do. This idea was present in the metaphor of “Silesia – our home” by Zbigniew Kadłubek (Tomaszewski 2015).

In the end, however, the results of the elections were not in favour of previous estimations. The Committee presented its candidates in two constituencies. In the constituency of Katowice (no. 31) the Committee achieved the result of 10 740 votes and in the constituency of Rybnik (no. 30) it got 7,928 (Results 2015...). Respectively 2.61% by a voter turnout 53.92% and 2.73% by a voter turnout 51.82%. The first person on the list in the constituency no. 31 – Zbigniew Kadłubek – got 5,010 votes (46.7% of votes for this committee). Second person – Dietmar Brehmer got 1,284 votes (11.9%). The first person on the list in the constituency no. 30 – Anna Ronin – got 2,758 votes (34.8% of votes for this committee). While the second person – Marek Polok – got 1,829 votes (23.1%). These numbers did not give ZdŚ any mandate and they were called a “failure” of the initiative in the local press (Zasada 2015).

Study

Upper Silesia was already called as “an exception” in the case of social and political patterns of behaviour of its population (Wódz 2010: 41). This is connected to the strong regional and ethnic identity of Silesians and to growing feelings of separateness present in the region that lead to particular political needs and activities. The theory of cleavages (socio-political divisions) recognises the conflict between centre and periphery as one of the conflicts shaping political loyalties of people belonging to the territorial minorities in opposition to the centralised national culture and politics (Lipset, Rokkan 1967: 11). It is relevant for the voters' behaviour in a simple way: the criterion of voters' alignments is the commitment to the locality and its culture (Lipset, Rokkan 1967: 13). Theory of conflict, also studied in Polish literature by Radosław Markowski, identifies methods for studying socio-cultural element of the conflict (2009: 14-15). According to Markowski the researcher shall:

1. identify two groups with opposite interests,
2. recreate the way in which the resources are used by individuals in the conflict,
3. analyse the attitude of each group taking part in the conflict based on realisation of their interests.

On the theory of an opposition of cleavages the idea of creating ethnoregionalist party is based. The conflict between centre and peripheries has already been recognised in the Polish literature as an important factor for development of political systems in the contemporary Europe and for creating political parties (Myśliwiec 2014: 23).

In the case of ZdŚ results in Silesia in 2015 this theory needs a verification. Furthermore, other possible reasons for the failure of this initiative shall be considered and researched. The study presented below is based on the questionnaire carried out from July till October 2016 on the group of 398 people residing in five communities with the highest rate of Silesian nationality declarations in the region within the constituencies, where the ZdŚ Committee took part in the elections. According to the National Census 2011: 41.5% of 76,367 residents of rybnicki district and 27.9% of 140,924 residents of the city of Rybnik, 40.5% of 94,661 residents of mikołowski district, 36.9% of 58,057 residents of bieruńsko-lędziński district and 36.5% of 57,745 residents of the city Piekary Śląskie declared Silesian nationality (*Wybrane tablice...tab.55; Województwo Śląskie...111-117*). In each of districts, where the questionnaire was carried out, the number of participants was as follows:

1. residents of rybnicki district and the city of Rybnik: 272 (68.3%),
2. residents of mikołowski district: 41 (10.3%),
3. residents of bieruńsko-lędziński district: 48 (12%),
4. residents of the city Piekary Śląskie: 37 (9.3%).

More men (53.9%) than women (46.1%) took part in the study. Furthermore, the dominant age group was 51-69 years old (29.1%), while others were: 31-50 years old (28.1%), 19-30 years old (27.1%), 70 and more years old (11.5%), 15-18 years old (4.3%). More people residing in cities (71.4%) than living in the country (28.6%) took part in the questionnaire. As to the education, 53.2 % finished high school or equivalent, Master's degree was held by 16%, Bachelor degree by 15.4%, primary school graduates totalled 11.2%, while middle school (Gymnasium) 4.5%.

Results

In the case where the answers from more than one question are studied together other configurations than the agreement or disagreement in both are not considered. In the tables there are presented only situations in which the same answers were given to the both questions, in descriptions there are also considered situations when the respondents agree or disagree in both questions regardless of the strength of declaration.

Table 1. The share of answers to the questions: “Did you vote for the Zjednoczeni dla Śląska in 2015?” and “Did you vote for Ruch Autonomii Śląska in 2014?”

	Yes	No
Did you vote for the ZdŚ Committee in 2015?	14.3%	85.7%
Did you vote for Ruch Autonomii Śląska in 2014?	25.3%	74.7%
Both	12.7%	87.3%

Source: own construction based on conducted research

During the Parliamentary Elections in 2015 14.3% of respondents voted for ZdŚ, while during the Elections in 2014 to the decentralised bodies (local or regional authorities) 25.3% of respondents voted for Ruch Autonomii Śląska. Among the respondents who voted on either of the mentioned Committees only 12.7% voted for both of them in both elections.

Table 2. The attitude of respondents toward the statement: “Voting in parliamentary elections have different priorities than in elections to decentralised bodies.”

	Definitely agree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Definitely disagree
Voting in parliamentary elections have different priorities than in elections to decentralised bodies	18.1%	27.1%	30.2%	18.6%	6.0%
Among ZdŚ voters	17.5%	8.8%	15.8%	29.8%	28.1%
Among non ZdŚ voters	17.9%	30.2%	32.9%	16.7%	2.3%

Source: own construction based on conducted research

Some respondents – 45.2% – agree or definitely agree that while voting in the Parliamentary elections they have different priorities than in the elections to decentralised bodies (local or regional authorities), whereas 24.6% disagree or definitely disagree.

There is a clear difference in the answers to this question among ZdŚ voters and respondents who did not vote for the Committee. Among ZdŚ voters: 26.3% agree or definitely agree with the statement, while 57.9% disagree or definitely disagree. Among respondents who did not vote for ZdŚ: 48.1% agree or definitely agree with the statement, while 19% disagree or definitely disagree.

Table 3. The attitude of respondents toward the statements: “I am Silesian.” and “Silesians are strongly bond to their region.”

	Definitely agree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Definitely disagree
I am Silesian	38.1%	35.3%	7.3%	15.3%	4.0%
Silesians are strongly bond to their region	31.1%	42.9%	18.9%	5.6%	1.5%
Among ZdŚ voters	63.2%	12.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Among non ZdŚ voters	18.2%	22.0%	4.7%	0.9%	0.3%

Source: own construction based on conducted research

Most respondents 73.4% agree or definitely agree, that they are Silesians, while 19.3% disagree or definitely disagree. Also, 74% of respondents believe that Silesians are strongly bond to their region, while 7.1% think otherwise.

Among ZdŚ voters: 87.7% agree or definitely agree with both statements, while non ZdŚ voters disagree or strongly disagree with both statements. On the other hand, among respondents who did not vote for ZdŚ: 52.2 % agree or definitely agree with both statements and 1.2% disagree or definitely disagree with both statements.

Table 4. The attitude of respondents toward the statements: “Politicians on the central level do not understand the needs of Silesia.” and “I would vote for a regional party.”

	Definitely agree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Definitely disagree
Politicians on the central level do not understand the needs of Silesia	44.9%	21.1%	26.8%	5.5%	1.8%
I would vote for a regional party	28.9%	27.6%	22.4%	13.6%	7.5%
Among ZdŚ voters	60.0%	5.3%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Among non ZdŚ voters	16.7%	6.5%	10.6%	2.3%	0.3%

Source: own construction based on conducted research

Most respondents believe, that politicians on the central level do not understand the needs of Silesia region – 66%, only 7.3% respondents answered otherwise. However, the number of respondents who would vote on a regional party is 56.5%. 21.1% of the respondents would not do it.

Among ZdŚ voters: 77.2% respondents agree or definitely agree with both statements, only 1.8% respondents disagree or strongly disagree with them. Among non ZdŚ voters: 39% respondents agree or definitely agree with both statements, while 5.3% disagree or definitely disagree.

Table 5. The attitude of respondents toward the statements: “German minority is significant for Silesia.”

	Definitely agree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Definitely disagree
German minority is significant for Silesia	7.5%	19.1%	44.2%	20.1%	9.1%
Among ZdŚ voters	14.0%	36.8%	33.4%	12.3%	3.5%
Among non ZdŚ voters	6.5%	16.2%	45.9%	21.4%	10.0%

Source: own construction based on conducted research

More respondents do not agree or definitely do not agree – 29.2%, that German minority is significant for Silesia region, while 26.6% agree or definitely agree with that statement.

Among ZdŚ voters it is different. 50.8% of them agree or definitely agree that the German minority is significant for Silesia region, while only 15.8% do not agree or definitely do not agree. Among respondents who did not vote for ZdŚ more respondents do not agree or definitely do not agree – 31.4%, that the German minority is significant for Silesia region, while 22.7% agree or definitely agree with this statement.

Table 6. The attitude of respondents toward the statements: “I believe that cooperation with Germans is a bad idea.”

	Definitely agree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Definitely disagree
I believe that cooperation with Germans is a bad idea	6.0%	14.3%	32.3%	25.6%	21.8%
Among ZdŚ voters	1.8%	1.8%	10.4%	22.8%	63.2%
Among non ZdŚ voters	6.7%	16.4%	35.8%	26.1%	15.0%

Source: own construction based on conducted research

More respondents disagree or definitely disagree that the cooperation with German minority is a bad idea 47.4%, while 20.3% agree or definitely agree with that statement.

Among ZdŚ voters: 86% disagree or definitely disagree – that the cooperation with German minority is a bad idea, while 3.6% agree or definitely agree with that statement. Among non ZdŚ voters 41.1% disagree or definitely disagree with that statement, while 23.1% agree or definitely agree.

Table 7. The attitude of respondents toward the statements: “I believe that pro-Silesia attitude is damaging.”

	Definitely agree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Definitely disagree
I believe that pro-Silesia attitude is damaging	2.8%	6.8%	16.8%	31.4%	42.2%

Source: own construction based on conducted research

Most respondents – 73.6% disagree or definitely disagree that pro-Silesia attitude is damaging, while 9.6% believes otherwise.

Table 8. The recognition of Zbigniew Kadłubek and Anna Ronin among all respondents

	Yes	Do not know	No
I recognise Zbigniew Kadłubek	34.9%	12.0%	53.2%
I recognise Anna Ronin	21.4%	11.9%	66.8%

Source: own construction based on conducted research

Table 9. The recognition of Zbigniew Kadłubek and Anna Ronin among ZdŚ voters

Among ZdŚ voters	Yes	Do not know	No
I recognise Zbigniew Kadłubek	89.5%	1.8%	8.7%
I recognise Anna Ronin	68.4%	10.5%	21.1%

Source: own construction based on conducted research

Among respondents 34.9 % recognise the leader of electoral list in the constituency of Katowice – Zbigniew Kadłubek. Among ZdŚ voters more than twice as many respondents recognise him (89.5%). The same situation can be observed in the case of the recognition of the leader of electoral list in the constituency of Rybnik – Anna Ronin. Among all the respondents she was recognised by 21.4%, while among ZdŚ voters the number is thrice as big (68.4%).

Commentary

The estimations of the results of ZdŚ were based on electoral results of RAŚ from 2014. There are similarities which allowed that estimations: RAŚ supported ZdŚ and its campaign, some politicians from RAŚ were candidates on ZdŚ lists, both RAŚ and ZdŚ presented ethnoregionlist programs. Still, only 12.7% of respondents voted for both Committees respectfully in 2014 and 2015. In 2014 RAŚ gained 25.3% votes from the respondents, while in 2015 ZdŚ got 14.3%.

There may be a few explanations of that fact: different candidates, different programs and different kind of elections. The last possibility was studied in the questionnaire. In public opinion the role of elections to decentralised bodies is different from the role of elections to the

Parliament. This thesis was studied by Waldemar Wojtasik (2011: 217, 222). Most respondents in the research carried out in 2011 answered that the elections to decentralised bodies have the biggest influence on their everyday life, while at the same time, many respondents pointed out that they have a little role in the political system of the country and the most important decisions are made elsewhere. As to the parliamentary elections, according to the same study, they have the biggest influence on the governing in the country, while their influence on everyday life is smaller. In 2016 in the study carried out by the author of this article some respondents (45.2%) agree or definitely agree that voting in the parliamentary elections they have different priorities than in elections to decentralised bodies (local or regional authorities). While 24.6% disagree or definitely disagree. There is a clear difference in the answers to this question among ZdŚ voters and respondents who did not vote for the Committee. Among ZdŚ voters: 26.3% agree or definitely agree with the statement, while 57.9% disagree or definitely disagree. Among respondents who did not vote for ZdŚ: 48.1% agree or definitely agree with the statement, while 19% disagree or definitely disagree. It may suggest, together with the electoral results of ZdŚ, that regional and ethnic problems are the problems of everyday life for voters, rather than the issues connected to the system of governance in the country. This attitude is radically different in the case of ZdŚ voters who see this problem as one of the issues, which shall be considered while making the most important decisions in the State.

The role of the ethnic identity and the expressed bond to the region may play an important role in the case of voting for ethn-regionalist party. Existence of a strong Silesian identity and its growing popularity have already been observed by scholars (Gerlich 2004: 170). Political claims are present since the beginning of Silesian (Upper Silesian) regional movement. They are mostly based on resentments and claims based on the harm, perceived as such by indigenous population, made to Silesians during Polish Peoples' Republic times and previously emerging after 1989 (Wanatowicz 2004: 150-151). In the study the connection between ethnic identity, regional bond and voting for ethnoregionalist party was reaffirmed. Among ZdŚ voters: 87.7% agree or definitely agree that they are Silesians and that Silesians have strong bond to their region, while none disagree or strongly disagree with both statements. On the other hand, among respondents who did not vote for ZdŚ: 52.2 % agree or definitely agree with both statements and 1.2% disagree or definitely disagree with them.

On the left-right axis Silesians are believed to be centre-orientated (Turska-Kawa, Wojtasik 2010: 127). This leads to the situation, when many state-wide political parties also

claim to be representatives of the Silesians interests. This situation shall not be considered as a surprise, taking into consideration the fact, that a political popularity of representatives of Silesian regional movement was to be observed at the beginning of the 90., but then fell, only to rise again in 2010 and following years. Moreover, the State-wide political issues are a part of the programs of State-wide parties rather than of ethnoregionalist ones, which is confirmed in the political program presented by ZdŚ. The place, in which regionalist and ethnoregionalist parties may fit, is the politics in the region and the policy for the region. This problem was studied in the questionnaire by the author. Most respondents believe that politicians on the central level do not understand the needs of the Silesia region – 66%, only 7.3% respondents answered otherwise. However, the number of respondents who would vote on regional party is 56.5%, while 21.1% would not choose it. Among ZdŚ voters 77.2% respondents agree or definitely agree that politicians on the central level do not understand the needs of the region and they would vote for a regional party, only 1.8% respondents disagree or strongly disagree with both statements. Among non ZdŚ voters: 39% respondents agree or definitely agree with both statements, while 5.3% disagree or definitely disagree. The study shows, that not only more than 2/3 of the ZdŚ voters, but also more than 1/3 of the respondents who did not vote for the Committee, connects the problem of the lack of understanding of particular problems of the region on the state-level and the need for a new political representation of Silesian interests in politics, also the state-wide politics.

ZdŚ was the initiative of a Silesian cooperation, regardless of the national identity of people taking part in it. This way not only Silesian who claim to be just Silesians, but also the ones claiming to be Polish-Silesians or German-Silesians were invited. The inclusion of German minority was, however, seen as a risky move. It was mostly so due to the fact that the idea of a creation of tolerant, multi-ethnic and multi-nation society in the region is still not a popular one. It could be seen in existence of tension connected to the restoration of German culture and efforts towards commemoration of the German activist living and acting in Upper Silesia (Cybula, Majcherkiewicz 2005: 151). The risk connected to cooperation with German minority was pointed out by Krzysztof Kwaśniewski, suggesting that this kind of cooperation may seriously weaken Silesian movement, even if Germans were, are and presumably will be part of the Silesian social landscape (2004: 89). The significance of German minority and the evaluation of the cooperation with them in public opinion was studied by the author. More respondents do not agree or definitely do not agree – 29.2%, that German minority is significant for the Silesia

region, while 26.6% agree or definitely agree with that statement. Among ZdŚ voters the attitude is different: 50.8% of them agree or definitely agree that German minority is significant for Silesia region, while only 15.8% do not agree or definitely do not agree. Among respondents who did not vote for ZdŚ more do not agree or definitely do not agree – 31.4%, that German minority is significant for Silesia region, while 22.7% agree or definitely agree with that statement. More respondents disagree or definitely disagree that the cooperation with German minority is a bad idea 47.4%, while 20.3% agree or definitely agree with that statement. Among ZdŚ: voters 86% disagree or definitely disagree that the cooperation with German minority is a bad idea, while 3.6% agree or definitely agree with that statement. Among non ZdŚ voters: 41.1% disagree or definitely disagree with that statement, while 23.1% agree or definitely agree. These two problems show difference in attitude of ZdŚ voters and respondents who did not vote for ZdŚ towards German minority question. The number of respondents who believe that German minority has a significant role in Upper Silesia is twice as big in the case of ZdŚ voters. The same is true for the evaluation of the cooperation with German minority, twice as many respondents disagree with the opinion, that it was a bad idea.

There are many attitudes present in the Silesian society. Some of them are controversial or even radical, some of them are seen as such. Due to that fact, it has become interesting for the author to find out the attitude of the respondents towards actions which were called “pro-Silesian”. The term itself is not a clear one, though it was to cover the actions promoting interests of the region and its inhabitants in general. Most respondents – 73.6% disagree or definitely disagree, that pro-Silesian attitude is damaging, while 9.6% believe otherwise. As the study showed almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of respondents were in favour (or at least not against) of promoting the activities and attitudes which aimed at serving the population of this particular region.

In the Polish elections the phenomena of voting for the leaders of the lists was observed. It can be explained in two ways: as a way to support the party as such, but also as a way to support the particular candidate (personalisation of voting decisions). In the second case the person of the leader of the list is highly important for a success of the party (Peszyński 2011: 245). In the study the problem of recognition of the leaders was researched. Among the respondents 34.9 % recognise the leader of the electoral list in constituency of Katowice – Zbigniew Kadłubek. Among ZdŚ voters more than twice as many respondents recognised him (89.5%). The same situation can be observed in the case of the recognition of the leader of electoral list in constituency of Rybnik – Anna Ronin. Among all the respondents she was

recognised by 21.4%, while among ZdŚ voters the number is thrice as big (68.4%). The study shows that more ZdŚ voters recognise leaders of electoral lists than the average for respondents in the study. It does not, however, answer the question to what extent the decisions about voting for leaders of ZdŚ electoral lists was based on choosing the candidate or the Committee.

Conclusions

The ZdŚ Committee did not meet expectations as to its electoral result. One of the reasons of that was the fact, that voters expected from regional party clear economic and social program, which would fill the need of representatives of regional interests on the State level. Its program was based on the ethnic identity and bond to the region, but these problems, however important for many, are seen as regional or everyday life issues. For many, they are not the most important factors in a process of making the decision in the parliamentary elections. Still, it does not mean, that they do not have their place in the minds of electorate, they are important especially for people who voted for ZdŚ during the elections in 2015.

The study shows that not only more than 2/3 of the ZdŚ voters, but also more than 1/3 of respondents who did not vote for the Committee, connect the problem of the lack of understanding of particular problems of the region on State-level to the need for a new political representation of the Silesian interests in politics, also state-wide politics. Due to that fact it may be stated, that there is a place in the Polish political landscape (especially in Silesia region) for regionalist or ethnoregionalist parties.

The attitude to German minority and cooperation with it is diverse within the Silesian population. The quarter of respondents believe that German minority has a significant role in the region and almost half of them saw the possibility to cooperate. It seems that the idea of cooperation of all Silesians, regardless of their differences, is not unfamiliar to respondents.

It shall be noted that 3/4 of respondents were not against “pro-Silesian” attitudes and actions. This shows the attitude of the inhabitants of the region, which is positive for the possibility of creation of an organised political representation in the region.

Summarising, the ideas raised by the Electoral Committee of Voters “Zjednoczeni dla Śląska” has a support from the part of Silesian population. The need for a political representation of the interests of ethnic group of Upper Silesians and the regional group of the inhabitants of the Upper Silesia region – part of Śląskie Voivodeship – can be seen in the results of the study. The biggest problem of the initiative seems to be rather its execution than the idea itself.

Many thanks for volunteers from Demokratyczna Unia Regionalistów Śląskich, Młodzi Górnolązacy and Studenckie Śląskoznawcze Koło Naukowe "Sodalitas Silesiana". The project would have never succeeded without your help and involvement in the questionnaires.

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